United Nations S/PV.8176

Security Council

Seventy-third year

Provisional

8176th meeting

Wednesday, 7 February 2018, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Alotaibi	(Kuwait)
Members:	Bolivia (Plurinational State of)	Mr. Inchauste Jordán
	China	Mr. Ma Zhaoxu
	Côte d'Ivoire	Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue
	Equatorial Guinea	Mr. Ndong Mba
	Ethiopia	Mr. Alemu
	France	Mrs. Gueguen
	Kazakhstan	Mr. Umarov
	Netherlands	Mr. Van Oosterom
	Peru	Mr. Meza-Cuadra
	Poland	Ms. Wronecka
	Russian Federation	Mr. Nebenzia
	Sweden	Mr. Orrenius Skau
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Mrs. Haley

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2018/76)

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18-03500 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2018/76)

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

Mr. Tanin joins today's meeting via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2018/76, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: At the outset, I would like to congratulate all the new Member States that have joined the Security Council in 2018. In particular, I would like to congratulate you, Mr. President, and Kuwait on your assumption of the presidency of the Council for this month. Today I will update the Council on new developments, some of which are well documented in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/76) before the Council, while focusing on key facts that have dominated the reporting period and the days that followed.

The new enlargement strategy of the European Union (EU) for the Western Balkans was launched yesterday. It is the most ambitious and far-reaching framework for engagement since the Thessaloniki Summit of 2003. The new strategy paves the way for enlargement linked to political and socioeconomic reform, as well as reconciliation and a lasting resolution of the disputes. There was mixed reaction in Kosovo but most Pristina leaders emphasized the importance of the new strategy for the realization of Kosovo's EU perspective. Within the new framework, it is clear that dialogue and the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina is a prerequisite for Kosovo's EU aspirations.

While there have been a number of formal and informal high-level contacts of leaders from Pristina and Belgrade, for more than a year, the dialogue has produced little substantive progress at the technical level. A number of standing agreements are yet to be fully implemented. Among those, the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities is essential. The year 2018 can provide new momentum for that dialogue. As the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy herself highlighted yesterday, the dialogue could be positively concluded with the sufficient will of the leaders and the adequate encouragement of the international community.

The recent attempt to abrogate the law on the Specialist Chambers by a number of members of the ruling coalition in the Kosovo Assembly drew attention and raised grave concerns among all stakeholders about Kosovo's commitment to justice and the impartial application of the rule of law. The establishment of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office, endorsed by the Assembly in 2015, was a major achievement for Kosovo. Yet, in contradiction to that advancement, on the evening of 22 December 2017, some Kosovo members of Parliament launched an effort to revoke a key law supporting the work of the Specialist Chambers. Nearly all regional and international partners of Kosovo made it clear that such a move, if successful, would be deeply damaging to Kosovo's aspirations and reputation. Some political leaders withdrew their support for that proposal. However, for now, the motion to repeal the law remains on the Assembly's agenda. The President of the Assembly of Kosovo assured me that leaders in Pristina would stand by their international commitments. I take this opportunity to reiterate that the court does

not target any particular community or group but only the criminal responsibility of individuals. That is well known by many people in Kosovo who understand that repealing the Specialist Chambers is simply not an option. The only way forward is by accepting justice.

The murder, on 16 January, of Oliver Ivanović, the prominent Kosovo Serb politician, in broad daylight sent shockwaves throughout Kosovo and across the region, raising concerns about the prospect of another wave of political instability. Hours after it took place, I condemned the murder, calling for calm and for swift and decisive work by the investigating authorities. All representatives of the international community were united in that view. Moreover, I have urged all parties to work together to ensure that the perpetrators of that brutal act are brought to justice.

It is important to note that the leaders in Belgrade and Pristina have reacted to the event in a prompt and responsible manner. Since the Kosovo Police are leading the investigation, Pristina and Belgrade have come to an understanding on sharing information and supporting the process. Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić visited Kosovo shortly after the crime and told the Kosovo Serb communities in the north and the south of Kosovo that peace was of paramount importance. I would also like to underline the constructive role of the Pristina officials in facilitating that visit.

In my meetings with leaders in Pristina, they made it clear to me that they are doing whatever is necessary to find the perpetrators of that crime and the motives for the killing. Belgrade is cooperating with the investigation but concerns remain, including about the efficiency of information exchange. Failure to identify the perpetrators would not only be a terrible miscarriage of justice but also undermine confidence on all sides.

In 2017, Kosovo underwent parliamentary and municipal elections and the formation of a new Government. The people of Kosovo have high expectations of their Government and the Assembly given their needs and the promises made to them. The harsh realities of everyday life in Kosovo — unemployment, challenges to good governance and economic and social development, as well as corruption and organized crime — all require political actors to come together, transcend their differences and achieve unity of purpose for the good of the people. They will be assisted in that by ensuring a positive and productive relationship with the international community and all institutional presences on the ground.

A welcome example has been the unified efforts of political parties to adopt the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. I commend the Government's commitment to strive to end poverty, improve education, prioritize gender equality, protect the environment, promote a just and peaceful society and ensure prosperity for all. Those commitments are fundamental to overcoming the challenges facing Kosovo.

The international community continues to assist the Kosovo institutions in promoting justice, the rule of law and human rights. The Government of Kosovo adopted four draft laws on the functioning of the judicial system aimed at increasing its efficiency and transparency. I would like to mention that judicial integration is moving forward, with officials at the Basic Court and Basic Prosecution Office of Mitrovica working as part of a unitary Kosovo justice system. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is working hand in hand with the other international presences in order to enable the full functioning of that integrated system, following up on issues such as full compliance with language rights.

At the same time, we take note of the decision of the Government of Kosovo to recognize and verify the status of victims of conflict-related sexual violence, including the allocation of monthly pensions for survivors. Additionally, I acknowledge the appointment by the Prime Minister of Kosovo, Ramush Haradinaj, of the Deputy Chair of the Kosovo Government Commission on Missing Persons.

Despite those important steps, many challenges remain on furthering the rule of law and strengthening human rights in Kosovo. Efforts in those areas must be guided by international best practices. Among a number of setbacks to the rule of law, the use of presidential pardons for three individuals convicted of murder in the so-called Hajra family case was particularly concerning. Human rights protections should not be diminished by political considerations or ethnic dimensions; such attempts would cast a dark shadow over the promises of a rules-based society.

UNMIK and its partners have assisted in strengthening the role of women and youth, as well as in helping consolidate their essential contribution to peace, security and trust-building across communities.

The annual international campaign 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence took place throughout Kosovo during the reporting period. The campaign highlighted actions on international, governmental and civil society levels that contributed to public awareness of the drivers and consequences of violence against women and girls. Women still face an uphill challenge in electoral politics. Of 204 mayoral candidates across all of Kosovo's municipalities, only eight were women. A concerted effort is required to achieve a more balanced representation and provide women with a more level-playing field.

Similarly, the youth and peace and security agenda remains important in Kosovo. The youth of Kosovo, despite their understandable frustrations with the status quo, provide hope for a better present and future. UNMIK continues to engage young people from across Kosovo through initiatives such as the United Nations Youth Assembly in Kosovo. I am inspired by the strength of character of the young leaders I have met — leaders who have the courage to join hands across societal divides and develop a common strategy and vision for a successful, multi-ethnic society.

Building trust between communities remains essential for the Mission. Sustainable peace cannot be achieved without the engagement of all institutions and the assistance of the international community to build bridges for long-term trust. Our Mission has undertaken a number of initiatives focused on supporting grassroots trust-building and using the know-how of the United Nations to help achieve that end. There are many Kosovo leaders, at all levels across society, who are committed to that agenda and actively supporting it.

This moment represents an opportunity for both progress and moving the political dialogue forward. I completed a series of consultations just before this Council meeting with leaders and officials in Pristina, Belgrade and Tirana. Despite the significant differences voiced, I am convinced that those leaders also have a broader understanding of the nature of the challenges that need to be overcome and equally, not to continuously postpone action to another day. I would like to underline that despite all the disagreements, the potential for trust and more forward-looking decision-making should not be underestimated.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; interpretation provided by the delegation*): I would like to thank Secretary-General Guterres and his Special Representative, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for their submission of the report before us (S/2018/76) and their overall dedication and engagement in the realization of the mandate of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under resolution 1244 (1999). I would also like to recognize and express my gratitude to the President and the members of the Security Council for the extensive attention they accord to the continued consideration, review and understanding of the issue, which is of paramount importance to the Republic of Serbia.

Some members of the Security Council suggested before this meeting that, in the delivery of our statements, we stick to the topic of the meeting, demonstrate constructiveness, maintain calm and avoid all provocations and confrontation. Just as I did in my previous statement (see S/PV.8100), I shall focus on the current situation in Kosovo and Metohija and the developments that took place in the preceding quarter, as well as on the report of the Secretary-General. I hope that the representative of Pristina will also honour those recommendations and that she will not, as she did in the past, hold a history lesson full of falsehoods, unfounded accusations and unwarranted embellishments of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, disregarding, all along, the report of the Secretary-General and the realities on the ground.

The reality on the ground is that the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations was signed as early as August 2013, and that Agreement provides for the establishment of a community of Serb-majority municipalities. I would like to remind those present that I signed that Brussels Agreement together with Hashim Thaçi and Catherine Ashton, the latter on behalf of the European Union. As members of the Council know very well, the establishment of the community is a question of crucial and enormous importance for Serbia as it aims to ensure and protect the vital interests of the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and improve their everyday lives.

For four and a half years now, Serbia has been waiting patiently for Pristina to fulfil its fundamentally important obligation. In the meantime, 30 non-permanent Member States have been in and out of this esteemed organ, and each and every one of them called on Pristina to fulfil its obligations. Unfortunately,

rather than forward, the movement thus far has only been backward. In his report, the Secretary-General notes that

> "There was no progress towards the establishment of the community/association of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo ... No indications were provided about when and how steps towards the establishment of the community/association might be taken." (*S/2018/76, para. 21*)

That is the reality on the ground.

I would also like to remind members on this occasion that Serbia's participation in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina was both dedicated and responsible, and that, irrespective of the hurdles and challenges, my country approached it with the strong conviction that there is no alternative to such an approach and that only within a status-neutral framework is it possible to contribute to regional peace, security and stability, as well as the realization of conditions for the Western Balkans unimpeded progress towards European Union membership.

Convinced that this approach has no alternative and that all issues must be resolved peacefully through dialogue, for its part Serbia has fulfilled its obligations consistently and in good faith. I emphasize, once again, that Serbia is ready to continue engaging in dialogue; however, it is questionable if a new agreement would have any meaning at all, given that four and a half years after the signing of the Brussels Agreement we continue to be saddled with a lack of indications as to when and how it will be implemented for the establishment of the community.

The reality on the ground is that Oliver Ivanovic, the leader of the Civic Initiative "Freedom, Democracy, Justice", was shot dead in Kosovska Mitrovica on 16 January and his murder has dramatically jeopardized security in Kosovo and Metohija. We welcome the reaction of Special Representative Tanin, who condemned that gruesome act and called for a speedy and resolute investigation, providing assurances that all international agencies will support the authorities and help them arrest those responsible for the crime.

The murder of Oliver Ivanović is a senseless terrorist act that threatens the stability not only of northern Kosovo and Metohija, but also the entire region. Serbia's political leaders and State authorities called for a calm and stable situation in the province. My country's responsible approach to the situation was confirmed on 21 and 22 January when the President of Serbia, Aleksandar Vučić, visited the Serbs in northern and central Kosovo and Metohija, and called on them to maintain stability, peace, calm and dignity, while emphasizing that all problems must be solved peacefully through dialogue.

Aware of the seriousness of the situation, Serbia sent correspondence to UNMMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), requesting that its State organs take part in the investigation of the murder, convinced that their participation would help to quickly and efficiently establish the truth. The request was reiterated by President Vučić in his telephone conversation with Hashim Thaçi. It was rejected by the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government in Kosovo and Metohija, which insisted that the investigation be conducted exclusively by the investigation authorities of Kosovo. However, three weeks after the murder, we have no information whatsoever except for statements by Pristina representatives that the settling of scores with local mafias was involved and that the murder was not ethnically motivated. Such statements have served only to obfuscate Pristina's inability or its lack of readiness to conduct an investigation into the gruesome crime.

I emphasize once again that bringing those who ordered the crime to be committed and its perpetrators to justice, as well as establishing the motives of the crime, are of vital importance to maintaining peace and trust among the people of Kosovo and Metohija. The tragic event proves that the overall security situation in the entire province is very serious, volatile and sensitive, and that the presence of the international community is required.

The reality on the ground is also that, at the end of last year and at the start of this year, the power structure and the political parties and leaders of Kosovo and Metohija tried to revoke the Specialist Chambers law intended to conduct trials for crimes allegedly committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA). There is no need to assure the Council of Serbia's concern about the situation because Council members were themselves surprised and concerned about the developments. In his report the Secretary-General expresses deep disappointment. He states that it is a step backwards in one of the most important areas, and strongly calls on Pristina to demonstrate its commitment to justice and the rule of law.

United States Ambassador Greg Delawie stated that any initiative to change the law governing the Specialist Chambers will have a profound negative impact on Kosovo' future in Europe and its relations with the United States. The head of the European Union Office in Pristina, Nataliya Apostolova, stated that she was shocked by the Kosovo Assembly initiative to revoke or abrogate in any way the law governing the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. German Ambassador Christian Heldt warned that the decision on the decision to establish Specialist Chambers could affect relations between Kosovo and its friends abroad. Those statements are clear evidence that the international community does not share the views of those who are behind the initiative, and that it believes that the heinous crimes committed against the Serbs and other non-Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija reported by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Special Rapporteur Dick Marty must not go unpunished and cannot be relativized or justified.

Mindful of the moral responsibility towards the victims and their families, we believe that the establishment of criminal responsibility in an impartial and credible way and the punishment of criminals will have a measurable impact on the fight against impunity and demonstrate that justice is achievable for all victims. I would like to assure the Council that Serbia is ready to provide the evidence it possesses on the commission of brutal crimes, which have no statute of limitations and must not be forgotten. In accordance with its laws and with international law, Serbia will continue to prosecute those for whom there is convincing evidence that they have committed criminal offences of war crimes against the civilian population in Kosovo and Metohija.

The positions held by some individuals in the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government cannot and must not deter us from achieving justice. They do not release those individuals from criminal responsibility for perpetrating the offences. In that regard, we were concerned about and disappointed in INTERPOL's recent decisions to remove international arrest warrants for a certain number of persons from Kosovo and Metohija from its list, including Hashim Thaçi and Ramush Haradinaj. Let me state unequivocally that such decisions set a precedent that is at variance with the rules of the organization.

Regrettably, the so-called President of Kosovo, Hashim Thaçi, pardoned three KLA members sentenced to 30 years in prison for killing all five members of the Albanian Hajra family near Glogovac in August 2001. The victims included 3-year-old Adelina and 9-year-old Mimoza. According to the EULEX report, their father, Hamsa Hajra, was a member of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Serbia and the entire family was killed as an act of KLA retaliation. In a joint communiqué, the Embassies of France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States in Pristina expressed deep concern about the decision taken by Hashim Thaçi to pardon the criminals. There is no need for me to assure the Council that the decision sparked concern among the Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija.

I recall that, in addition to approximately 16,500 internally displaced persons in the province, more than 200,000 continue to reside outside Kosovo and Metohija in central Serbia more than 18 years after the arrival of the international presence. Only 1.9 per cent of them have achieved sustainable returns, to which UNMIK should pay additional and maximum attention. It is noted in the report that the lowest number of returns since 2000 was recorded in 2017. Regrettably, only 498 people returned to the province. On one hand, that statistic is shocking; on the other hand, it is understandable and raises the question of who wants to return to a place to suffer discrimination every day; where nationalistic and religious hatred is not punished; property is not protected; jobs are few; people are exposed to intimidation, arbitrary arrests and ethnically motivated violence; the grave sites of their forefathers cannot be visited; and where the rule of law is implemented by institutions that have not brought a single legally valid decision for the killing of a large number of Serbs since the end of the conflict?

I pose the question again: Who would want to return to that situation? Before those problems are resolved structurally and institutionally, regrettably, the number of returnees will regrettably only be lower. In his report the Secretary-General mentions the continued lack of progress in implementing the ruling of the Constitutional Court of Kosovo in favour of the Visoki Dečani Monastery in a case of disputed land ownership. I would also like to underscore that the protection of the historical, cultural and religious heritage of the Serbian people in Kosovo and Metohija, which is at the same time an important part of European and world heritage, is a priority for the Republic of Serbia. There are harmful institutional attempts to conceal the true identity of Serbian heritage in the province, which is frequently designated as medieval Balkan or

Byzantine. However, such designations continue to be omitted from crucial Serbian heritage.

A responsible, realistic and rational approach is needed in the relations with Pristina. Serbia continues its internal dialogue to which President Vučić called its citizens. A working group has been established to support the dialogue. It is conducted at a number of levels and with the participation of all the relevant social groups. I assure the Council that Serbia wants to make a serious and responsible contribution to the stability of the region, political cooperation, understanding and economic progress. We want to offer a solution that would provide an opportunity for a historic agreement with the Albanian community in Kosovo and Metohija and will not cause new divisions, misunderstandings, instability and conflict. The solution must honour the interests of Serbia and the needs of the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija. To achieve that goal, genuine commitment and determination on both sides are needed in order to build very necessary trust and respect.

To that end, I would like to point out that the inappropriate and disconcerting statements made by some leaders of Albanian political parties do not contribute to the creation of a constructive atmosphere for the achievement of a historic agreement. Let me emphasize in particular that Pristina's one-sided acts, as well as each and every attempt to solve problems unilaterally, are entirely unacceptable to Serbia. I underscore that Serbia is firmly opposed to Pristina's intention to form a Kosovo army. Those and other similar attempts are very dangerous and could threaten not only the security of the province and the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, but also the stability of the entire region.

In addition, we have witnessed for some time attempts by Pristina to become a full-fledged member of international organizations despite the opposition of a considerable number of countries, including even some of those that have recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo. The most recent instances of such efforts were Kosovo's attempts to become a member of UNESCO, INTERPOL and the World Customs Organization. All those attempts, let me point out, run contrary to the basic principles of international law and are detrimental to — while needlessly politicizing — the work of international organizations. I take this opportunity to express special gratitude to all the countries that, with regard to that issue, support Serbia and, at the same time, insist, together with Serbia, on principled respect for universally accepted norms of the contemporary international order as it relates to upholding consistently the principles of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all States.

I would also like to remind Council members that for a decade — that is, since Kosovo declared independence by a unilateral act — Serbia has patiently, dedicatedly and responsibly apprised the international community of the apparent danger resulting from unilateral acts and admonished that the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo is a very dangerous and unacceptable precedent that, as we have witnessed, has already emboldened other separatist and secessionist movements all over the world. As in the past, Serbia continues to take measures to protect its national and State interests, with full respect for the basic principles of international law — primarily the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity as universal values reasserting freedom and equality among States and peoples. In that regard, I would like to thank once again those States that have not recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo for their consistent support and principled respect of the Charter of the United Nations and resolution 1244 (1999). At the same time, I call on those States that have done so to reconsider their decision and accordingly encourage both sides to find a mutually acceptable solution through dialogue.

Lastly, I would like to call on all members of the Security Council to focus together on finding a compromise and sustainable solution to this decades-long question and fully support UNMIK in the meantime, as its unimpeded presence in Kosovo and Metohija is key to building lasting peace, stability and security, as well as confidence among communities, and solving the problems facing the members of the Serbian and other non-Albanian communities in the province. In that context, I would point out the importance of maintaining UNMIK's financial and personnel capacities, which will allow the Mission to meet the complex demands of the implementation of its mandate.

What I have spoken about today is a testament to the reality that there are many problems, that the security situation is volatile and that commitment, patience and hard work will be required for us to be able to communicate a different reality to the international community from this same Chamber in three months

from now. For its part, Serbia is looking forward to the future and ready to invest all its resources to make a contribution towards achieving those goals.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: It is an honour to be here today. This month is very special for me and my fellow citizens. On 17 February, just 10 days from today, Kosovo will celebrate its first double-digit birthday. As I sit at this table and in this revered Chamber, together with representatives of States with their admirable centuries-old traditions of statehood — representatives of nations that have given so much to humankind, from science and technology, to arts and sports — I cannot help but reflect on our journey as an independent republic and wonder what Kosovo will look like in 10, 20 and 100 years from today. I wonder: How well have we done as a young democracy in meeting the rightful expectations of the Kosovar people? How well have our institutions performed? How much has our society evolved, and, most important, what is the legacy that we will leave behind?

Ten years later, Kosovo has been recognized by the overwhelming majority of the free nations of the world. Today Kosovo is a member of dozens of regional and international organizations. We are also very much aware that we would never have made it this far without States Members' unwavering support. The United Nations was there for us in our darkest hour of need, and for that we will be forever grateful. Today I must pay tribute to one great man in particular — Sergio Vieira de Mello — who was the first Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Kosovo. When Mr. De Mello arrived in Kosovo he found a country in ruins, a nation torn apart and devastated by the pains and horrors of war. Yet he somehow managed to bring our people together and establish a United Nations administration in Kosovo. Sergio may no longer be with us, but he will always be remembered.

Ten years of statehood have taught us that survival and independence cannot alone sustain us alone. They are not our sole concerns. Freedom and food on the table are not the only things that people require. They require education, health care, respect and dignity. In Kosovo we have come to learn that statehood is not only about building Government and institutions. Civil society, the free press and the non-governmental sector are equally as important, and often a driving force for growth. According to international organizations, Kosovo enjoys greater freedom of speech today than any other country in the region. That remarkable achievement is entirely attributable to those Kosovar journalists, who never bow to power, surrender to threats or compromise the truth. In Kosovo we have a vibrant civil society that, independent of the Government, rallies around issues ranging from war crimes committed during the war in Kosovo and special courts, to air pollution and energy costs.

Although our institutions may have their flaws, the irrefutable truth is that our society has matured. All one has to do is observe the manner in which Kosovar society and media reacted to the unfortunate assassination of Oliver Ivanović. Unlike what would have probably occurred in the past, Mr. Ivanović's assassination was a murder that did not incite ethnic hatred in Kosovo. In fact, local citizens and politicians and the media — both Albanian and Serbian — agreed that organized crime in northern Kosovo was to blame for the murder. Of course, Mr. Ivanović himself was a controversial figure. Nonetheless, we will leave no stone unturned until the perpetrators of that crime against him are brought to justice.

Allow me to also briefly address the debate surrounding the Specialist Chambers. First, Kosovo has an exemplary record with regard to cooperating with international and local war crimes tribunals. No a single Kosovar Albanian indicted for war crimes has ever attempted to escape justice. However, that is not the case with any of the former Yugoslav republics. In fact, if one looks at the numbers, they show that more Albanians have been prosecuted and convicted for war crimes in Kosovo than Serbs. Something is tremendously wrong with that fact.

Secondly, no court can rewrite history or artificially impose moral parity. The oppressor and the oppressed are clearly defined in our recent tragic history.

Thirdly, people in Kosovo want justice. They want justice for all of the victims, regardless of their ethnicity. The sentiment has been displayed most powerfully in various forms over the past few weeks. As a point of reference, 80 members of Parliament voted to establish the special court. Forty-three signatures to have a debate about that court in the Parliament cannot, and will not, undo that.

However, while we are on the topic of war crimes, let me talk about crimes that the special court will not

be dealing with nor, for that matter, will any other court. Take the Qyshk massacre, the trial which completely fell apart in Serbia, despite the public testimony of Serbian paramilitary Zoran Rašković about the killing of Albanians by paramilitary units, which was abundantly reported by the media. Or, consider the execution of the Bytyqi brothers, for which another witness came forward to testify just last week. Once again, no measures were taken by the Serbian justice system. Until convicted war criminals cease to be praised and promoted, the feeling of impunity is here to stay.

We are pleased that INTERPOL has decided to remove Mr. Ramush Haradinaj and Hashim Thaçi from its warrant list. That is a clear signal that INTERPOL will no longer allow Serbia to misuse its red notices for political gains. For the Council's information, I note that the Serbian justice system has accused and convicted world leaders such as Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Jacques Chirac and most of the European Union Heads of State.

There is no doubt that Kosovo has made progress and taken major steps forward. We just concluded a nearly flawless electoral process. Every day, the Kosovar people are demanding more accountability from their elected representatives. According to the World Bank, Kosovo's gross domestic product growth rate in 2017 was 4.4 per cent — the highest figure reported in the region.

Needless to say, Kosovo is not a paradise, and many challenges still linger. Yet for every challenge, for every single institutional shortcoming, there is a success story — a role model citizen that defies the odds and pushes the boundaries. In a country where there is a lot left to be done to improve the quality of education, where we still have overcrowded classrooms and overworked teachers, we also have young girls like Doruntina Sylejmani, who won medals at the International Math Olympiad. Today Doruntina is studying at Princeton, with a full scholarship, and dreams of coming back to help her country.

At a time of disbelief and doubt over whether the justice system is worth fighting for, Shyhrete Berisha, who witnessed the brutal execution of her husband and her four children during the war in 1999, was exposed to yet another form of injustice. She had to battle for 18 long years just to get back the keys to her own house — the house in which she lived with her husband and children. Throughout those 18 years, Shyhrete did not lose faith. She never gave up, and neither must we. We owe it to Shyhrete and to the many others who share similar experiences to work as hard as we possibly can to improve our justice system and make sure that everyone is equal in the eyes of the law.

Today survivors of sexual violence during the war in Kosovo have a legally regulated status and can benefit from pensions because of women like Kadire Tahiraj. For years, this group of survivors of painful wartime violence was completely neglected by institutions and stigmatized by society. While the rest of us were either hiding away from the truth or being both blind and deaf to it, Kadire was diligently working with the survivors, offering them all she could — care, medicine, shelter, at times perhaps even just a shoulder to cry on. Kadire fought tirelessly and kept her resolve even when all the odds were stacked against her. Finally, 18 years after the war, the Government has allocated the necessary funds to implement programmes for these survivors.

It is because of women like Fahrije Hoti, that Krusha, a village in south-western Kosovo, is no longer known only for its tragic past. A young widow herself, living in a village where most of the adult male population was eradicated during the war, Fahrije resolved that the best way to honour the fallen was by building a better life for the ones that remain. She started by working her patch of land and, with little to no institutional support, managed to not only sustain herself, but also to help organize other women to cultivate their fields and open small farms and businesses. Today their products are customer favourites in stores across our country.

Although Kosovo remains the only country in Europe without visa liberalization, our talented youth transcend borders and inspire their peers throughout the European continent and beyond. Just last month, Forbes published its famous 30 Under 30 List. Three amazing Kosovar women — Blerta, Dafina and Bilna — made us all proud by appearing on them. These young ladies are working hard to increase the transparency and accountability of the Government by utilizing digital platforms and novel technology. They understand, better than most, that European integration is an internal dynamic, that it is, first and foremost, about building and applying standards of transparency at home. We are all proud of these young women, and I am sure that we will be hearing more from them.

Let us not forget the one and only Majlinda Kelmendi — our golden pride, our golden champion.

While Kosovo was struggling to become a member of the Olympic Committee, Majlinda often had to practice in halls without electricity or heat. Nevertheless, she turned down the millions that were offered to her to compete under a different flag. She patiently waited for her chance to represent Kosovo. And when she finally got the opportunity to compete in Rio de Janeiro, Majlinda made us all proud by winning a gold medal. In doing so, she also taught us a lesson, a lesson of integrity, perseverance and love for one's country.

Although Kosovo has many obstacles to overcome, it is these women who make me hopeful. Whenever we come up short, whenever we fail to deliver, courageous women like them are there to lift us up. Time and again they empower us by inspiring us. They challenge power and authority; they fight for justice and social norms. They encourage us to dream and to dare.

We are meeting today one day after the European Union published its strategy for the Western Balkans. While we in Kosovo believe that the language used to describe Kosovo's path forward should have been more specific, perhaps more concrete, there is absolutely no doubt as to where the future lies. Moreover, what is made very clear by this strategy is that Kosovo and Serbia must normalize relations and enter into a legally binding agreement. Now more than ever, it is crystal-clear that the new status quo and another frozen conflict do not represent normalization. Normalization can be achieved only through the recognition of Kosovo, and the sooner Serbia recognizes Kosovo, the better it will be for the entire region.

As I have stated numerous times, we in Kosovo believe that the appropriate platform and venue for dialogue is in Brussels. I want to reaffirm our commitment to the dialogue and to the implementation of every single agreement reached in Brussels. However, the United Nations has no role in this process. The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo is neither a peacekeeping mission nor an administrative mission. The United Nations may choose to maintain an expensive mission in Kosovo, but we believe that its taxpayers' money could be put to much better use.

Women such as Fahrije, Kadire, Doruntina, Majlinda and many more do not have time for debates such as this one. While we meet here every three months to repeat the same old stories, they are out there changing the world, fighting for a better, brighter future for their families, their country and the global community. They do not have time to listen to us argue over whether the sky is blue. They know that my speech here today will not change anything, but their actions will. They are aware that Kosovo's independence is an irreversible fact, as confirmed by the ruling of the International Court of Justice. But they also know that it is in our power to create a more prosperous Kosovo to leave behind for the next generations, so that when we celebrate the next decades and centuries of independence, there will be a lot more to be proud of.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Umarov (Kazakhstan): I would like to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Tanin for his update on recent developments. I also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Mrs. Vlora Çitaku for their briefings.

An issue of great concern for all of us is the recent murder of the prominent politician Oliver Ivanović, from North Mitrovica municipality, which took place on 16 January. We urge close cooperation with all interested parties so as to carry out a fair and objective investigation and bring those responsible for this heinous crime to justice as soon as possible.

Kazakhstan fully supports the statement of the political leaders, the European Union (EU) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe condemning the murder and considers this barbaric act to be an attempt by some forces to disrupt the peace dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo. In this regard, we call on the leaders of the two parties and local communities to avoid any further provocative rhetoric or actions that could lead to additional tensions and instability. Democracy, security, stability and economic development cannot be achieved without the rule of law, criminal justice and institutional and human-rights-related reforms, including the fight against corruption and organized crime, and addressing any outstanding shortcomings of the judiciary and the need for its depoliticization, impartiality and independence, including in the prosecution of war crimes.

We commend the steps taken by the Governments of Serbia and Kosovo under the auspices of EU High Representative Mogherini to continue the dialogue by holding a series of technical-level meetings in Brussels. My delegation also encourages all interested parties to

continue interacting to strengthen confidence-building measures, trust, dialogue and cooperation, with the engagement of representatives of the Government, the opposition, civil society, women and youth, the media and religious organizations.

The role of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) in this process is very important. During the reporting period, UNMIK launched 12 confidence-building measures to promote an interest in dialogue as well as intercommunal reconciliation in different parts of Kosovo. The question of returning refugees and displaced persons, together with their resettlement, cultural heritage and human rights, still have to be addressed.

Finally, we believe that peace and stability in this part of the world will be achieved only if the parties continue to fulfil their commitments in a positive spirit of mutual respect, understanding and compromise.

Mrs. Gueguen (France) (*spoke in French*): I should like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and the Ambassador of Kosovo for their statements.

In the light of the situation described by the Special Representative, I should like to underscore three points.

First, as this year marks the tenth anniversary of Kosovo's independence, I should like to recall that France steadfastly stands beside Kosovo in supporting it in the building of its institutions and in its efforts to achieve economic and social development and establish itself on the international stage. Numerous efforts have been undertaken in terms of building institutions and achieving economic development. Kosovo is a peacekeeping success — a success story. However, a great deal remains to be achieved, and Kosovo can count on our support in moving along that path. All are aware of our commitment to strengthening the rule of law and combating organized crime and corruption.

We welcome the smooth conduct of the municipal elections of 22 October and 19 November last, which, following the legislative elections of June 2017, marked a milestone in Kosovo political affairs, even though, as was underscored by the European Union election observation mission, the climate of intimidation against some candidates and their voters in Serb municipalities of Kosovo is to be deplored.

France also condemned the murder on 16 January of the Serb leader of Kosovo Oliver Ivanović and called for the circumstances to be brought to light. France, like its American and European partners, voiced its concerns at the attempt to call into question the Specialist Chambers for Kosovo, and a Franco-German mission visited Pristina to express that concern. We have duly taken note of the political commitment of the Kosovar authorities not to abrogate the law, as was just mentioned by Ms. Çitaku, and we trust that this plan will be definitively abandoned very shortly.

Secondly, in the light of the information provided by the Special Representative every three months, the Security Council must focus on the issue of refocusing UNMIK efforts and coordinating them with other international actors with a presence in Kosovo. At a time when the discussion is focusing on the future of peacekeeping operations, the responsibility that we shoulder as members of the Security Council is indeed to ensure that the means deployed by the United Nations are tailored fully to the situation on the ground.

To that end, UNMIK and the United Nations must continue to support the efforts of the EU and its European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo for peace, progress and stability in Kosovo.

I shall end on a third point: the future of Kosovo. France believes that this is a priority in the political dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina conducted under the auspices of the European Union. The European Union is very clear in that regard: for both Serbia and Kosovo, rapprochement with the European Union is conditioned upon the complete normalization of their relations. France fully supports the mediation efforts led by the European Union and its High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Ms. Federica Mogherini.

The launch in Serbia of an internal dialogue on Kosovo is a positive sign, and the Serbian and Kosovar authorities have voiced their hope for giving new impetus to dialogue with a view to achieving full normalization of their relations. France fully supports this approach, which is critical for lasting peace and stability in the Western Balkans. Each side must do its part by adopting a constructive attitude and refraining from any unnecessary, or even dangerous, provocation. We also underline the importance of efforts to promote reconciliation and bringing communities closer together.

In conclusion, I would like to stress that the lasting solution to the conflict lies in making common cause with the European Union. The future of the Western Balkans is in joining the European Union, as High Representative Mogherini stressed yesterday while pointing out that 2025 was the horizon to which we must aspire and that the prospects for reaching it are realistic.

Mr. Ma Zhaoxu (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): China thanks Mr. Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo, for his briefing and welcomes the presence and statement of His Excellency Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia. I have also listened carefully to the statement made by Ms. Çitaku.

Currently, the situation in the Kosovo region involves numerous complex factors. Resolution 1244 (1999) provides an important legal basis for resolving the question of Kosovo. All parties should act in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions and seek through dialogue and negotiations a solution that is acceptable to all.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia. We understand Serbia's legitimate concern on the question of Kosovo and commend its efforts to strive for a political settlement.

China welcomes the continuation of the high-level dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We hope that the two sides will reaffirm their strong commitment to a political settlement, continue their dialogue in a pragmatic and constructive manner, implement existing agreements and gradually increase mutual trust so as to build up favourable conditions for finding a lasting solution that is acceptable to all parties concerned.

Tolerance, reconciliation and peaceful coexistence serve the fundamental interests of all ethnic communities in Kosovo and are necessary for achieving development. China hopes that the relevant parties will always put the well-being of their people first, protect the legitimate rights and interests of all communities in Kosovo, refrain from action and rhetoric that might escalate the situation, and safeguard the peace, stability and development of the Balkans.

The sustained attention of the Security Council on the question of Kosovo is crucial for promoting its proper settlement. China supports the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin in implementing its mandate and in cooperating constructively with all parties. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will work in close collaboration and play a constructive role in improving the situation on the ground and achieving a proper settlement of the Kosovo issue.

Mr. Alemu (Ethiopia): I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing on the latest developments in Kosovo.

We welcome His Excellency Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, to today's meeting and thank him for his presence and statement. I also thank Ambassador Vlora Çitaku for her statement.

Over the past year, Ethiopia has been consistent and clear in this position on the issue of Kosovo. We reaffirm our support for the peaceful and amicable solution of all outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with the Brussels Agreement. We also welcome the ongoing efforts made by the European Union in facilitating the dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo.

As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/76), the holding of municipal elections in a peaceful manner is indeed encouraging. However, we also note from the report that the security situation in northern Kosovo is still fragile, and the murder of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović is indicative of not only the prevailing tense security situation but also of how the situation is potentially dangerous. It is good that authorities in both Belgrade and Pristina are ready to cooperate in addressing this issue in spite of their emotionally-charged reaction initially. Identifying those responsible for the crime and bringing them to justice is no doubt important to reduce tension and restore calm. Special Representative Tanin could not have been more emphatic on the need to bring the killers to justice. We also appreciate his quick condemnation of the barbaric act.

We note that there was little substantive interaction between Belgrade and Pristina during the reporting

period, and we understand the murder of Mr. Ivanović has had its own impact. Some of the steps taken to implement the agreements reached within the framework of the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union (EU) are encouraging, while the lack of progress on some of the key provisions of the EU-facilitated agreements, including, inter alia, on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo, remains a source of concern.

It is our hope that the new leadership in both Belgrade and Pristina will continue to engage in dialogue and maintain the momentum in a positive and constructive spirit with a view to addressing outstanding issues and disagreements through peaceful means. That demands that both sides refrain from actions and statements that could cause ethnic discord and undercut efforts to create an atmosphere of trust and confidence conducive for dialogue. We will also support the call by the Secretary-General to the leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina to intensify their efforts aimed at implementing the agreements reached within the framework of the EU-facilitated dialogue.

Ethiopia fully supports the work that the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo has been undertaking in discharging its mandates in line with resolution 1244 (1999). Its engagement with municipal authorities and community representatives in support of the efforts to protect the rights of communities and to promote intercommunity reconciliation and trust-building is commendable, as is the effort being made by Kosovo authorities to implement measures aimed at preventing violent extremism and radicalization by constructively engaging with young people and women. It is our hope that UNMIK will continue to promote political dialogue, strengthen community reconciliation and ensure security and stability in Kosovo and the region. We also recognize the significant role played by the European Union on matters concerning Kosovo, and we commend the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force for their valuable contributions in Kosovo in the area of the rule of law and security.

In conclusion, I would like to say that security and stability in Kosovo and the region will ultimately be ensured when there is political will and resolve on the part of both. In that respect, we once again encourage both parties to remain committed to dialogue and negotiation with a view to finding a mutually acceptable solution.

Mr. Ndong Mba (Equatorial Guinea) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his excellent and comprehensive briefing, which provides greater clarity and a better understanding of the question of Kosovo. Indeed, his briefing demonstrated the need to tackle the political challenges in order to sustain and strengthen the progress made to date in Kosovo and for the benefit of the population. We also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, for her intervention.

The Republic of Equatorial Guinea conveys its condolences for the recent murder in broad daylight of Mr. Oliver Ivanović, leader of the Civic Initiative "Serbia, Democracy and Justice" party, and strongly condemns that horrendous crime. We join our voice to that of the political leaders of Belgrade and Pristina, the Secretary-General and members of the international community calling for the investigation of that crime and for that sad event not to derail the peace process in Kosovo. We commend the recommendation of Ambassador Çitaku, who said in her intervention that no effort would be spared to identify the perpetrators and to bring them to justice.

Equatorial Guinea is very clear about its position on the Kosovo issue and understands that the legal basis for a just resolution of the question of Kosovo is resolution 1244 (1999). Equatorial Guinea always advocates for direct, fair, frank and inclusive negotiations to resolve any dispute, and the position of Equatorial Guinea on the Kosovo issue remains the same. We support the efforts by the interested parties to find an appropriate solution that is acceptable for all through dialogue and negotiations, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and in the context of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

The question of Kosovo is complex because of sensitive issues such as national reconciliation, which involves the welfare of the people and the protection of the rights of all populations and communities in Kosovo. The opposing parties must refrain from any action that could exacerbate tensions and, instead, prioritize actions that promote peace and trust. That would

undoubtedly result in the pursuit of a final resolution that is satisfactory to all. The Security Council should remain seized of the Kosovo issue and, in that process, should encourage the parties to prioritize a direct and constructive dialogue, while respecting the agreements already reached.

Equatorial Guinea commends and appreciates the tremendous work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo since its establishment and the support that it provides to the communities of Kosovo, the regional and international actors and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe with a view to implementing the mandate of resolution 1244 (1999).

Respect for diversity and the participation of all communities, women and young people in the institutions and peace processes are critical elements to ensure a sustainable peace process. In that regard, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea would like to encourage the efforts in Kosovo in those areas and the role of UNMIK and the United Nations family in Kosovo in supporting such elements. We also encourage the deployment of all necessary efforts to resolve the problem of the internally displaced persons in Kosovo.

Guaranteeing security and stability in the area requires ongoing efforts to ensure the protection of human rights and to strengthen the rule of law. For that reason, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea shares the concern of Mr. Tanin over the recent crimes and violence in various parts of Kosovo. Such events make it necessary to step up efforts to improve the rule of law, strengthen the judicial institutions and promote development, peace and security in Kosovo.

Although the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union had to be suspended, the Republic of Equatorial Guinea hopes that it will resume as soon as possible and that both sides work in a spirit of mutual understanding and trust to protect the rights and interests of all communities.

Regional cooperation and good-neighbourly relations are crucial for the region. That is why the Republic of Equatorial Guinea hopes that UNMIK and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo will ensure the rule of law in Kosovo and, as we have already noted, play a very positive role in order to achieve a final resolution that is satisfactory to all.

I conclude my statement by congratulating and paying well-deserved tribute to Special Representative Zahir Tanin for his noble work in Kosovo.

Ms. Wronecka (Poland): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his very useful briefing. I also appreciate the statements of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and of Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

Poland shares our European partners' assessment with regard to the overall stability of the situation in Kosovo, which does not warrant the current frequency of reporting. We also believe that the time has come for the strategic review of UNMIK, which should lead to the re-evaluation of the level of international presence in Kosovo. Having recognized Kosovo's independence, in 2008, we remain confident that its political institutions are capable of realizing the potential of the country's future, which lies in its integration into the European Union. It will require the full engagement and consensus of the Kosovo political forces and society in order to implement the necessary reforms and meet, to the fullest extent, the obligations under international law.

That brings me to the issue of the attempts to repeal the law on the Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office, established to investigate the war crimes committed between 1998 and 2000. In that context, we would like to take positive note of the recent statement by President Thaçi that the special court cannot, and will not, be revoked. We see that as a reassuring sign of the acknowledgement at the highest level of the importance of the unassigned work of those institutions for the country's international and Euro-Atlantic integration.

Nevertheless, we also see room for improvement with respect to good governance and enhancement of the role of women in public life. No efforts should be spared in eradicating corruption and in achieving an efficient and accountable Government, as well as in ensuring the equitable representation of all citizens in the Government. We see that as the best guarantee for prosperity for all.

Lastly, we join others in strongly condemning the recent murder of the Kosovo Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. We would also like to express our faith in the ability of the relevant institutions in Kosovo to

investigate the crime in a professional manner and bring the perpetrators to justice. I would like to conclude by reiterating that Poland views Kosovo as fully capable of managing its own future.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) *(spoke in Russian)*: We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and we share the grave concerns he expressed about the state of affairs in Kosovo. We would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and his team for their work and objective briefing on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), which shows that the persistent serious problems in the province continue and are in urgent need of solutions and of oversight by the international community. We also listened attentively to Ms. Vlora Çitaku's statement.

Ten years ago, at the initiative of Russia, the Security Council convened in this Chamber to respond to Kosovo's unilateral declaration of independence (see S/PV.5821). We gave a warning at the time about the pernicious consequences of that step both for the situation in the province and for regional security, and today it is perfectly clear that the sponsors and executors of the questionable Kosovo project should reflect on the results of that misadventure. The illegal secession, whose forerunner was the NATO aggression of 1999, made a resolution of the Kosovo issue significantly more difficult. The result is that to this day there are still no clear prospects for a settlement and Kosovo continues to be one of the main problems on the regional, European and international agendas. Above all, the flouting of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a Member State continues, in violation of fundamental principles of international law.

The expectations of Pristina's supporters that the number of States recognizing Kosovo's so-called independence would keep going up have proved unfounded. On the contrary, there have recently been calls for retracting that recognition. Kosovo's applications for membership in a number of international organizations have been rejected. On the security front, the potential for serious conflict continues, and any incident is liable to spark an outbreak of violence. On top of that, the province continues to be a comfort zone for recruiting radicals. Attempts to sweep this issue under the rug could have costly consequences for both the Balkans and for Europe as a whole, especially since returning terrorists are fleeing there from Syria and Iraq.

The attempts to cultivate a self-sufficient political system with pretensions to being a legal democratic State have been fruitless. Behind the facade of public institutions we glimpse clannish interests and unresolved contradictions and conflict, and corruption and organized crime are rampant. The moderate political forces have been pushed into the background, and the current authorities, where former Kosovo Liberation Army fighters are running things, are being challenged by even more radical nationalists and those supporting the creation of a greater Albania. In spite of the promises, there has been no economic boom or influx of investments in the province, and as a result the socioeconomic situation is still disastrous. From that point of view, Kosovo remains the most unsuccessful area in the region.

We have always believed that the only solution to the Kosovo problem is a political one, which should be based on dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). Yet for the second year in a row the Brussels dialogue between the parties, in which the European Union took on the role of mediator, is stalled. The main reason for that is the Kosovo Albanians' refusal to fulfil their obligations, and in particular to implement the key First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina of April 2013 on establishing an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo. It is astonishing that the European mediators' attitude to this stagnation is strangely complacent.

In contrast, we note Belgrade's constructive attitude, demonstrating a willingness to continue the dialogue and seek ways to arrive at a long-term settlement of the relations between Serbs and Albanians on a basis of compromise. Unfortunately there has so far been no serious response to those calls from either Pristina or Brussels. At the same time, the signs are increasing that preparations are being made to ramp up pressure on Serbia's leaders in order to compel it to recognize a de facto Kosovo independence. In our view, if the negotiations on Serbia's admission to the European Union are used as a way of cranking up the pressure, that would call into question Brussels' objectivity and impartiality as an intermediary.

The recent murder of Oliver Ivanović, a prominent Kosovo Serb politician, is alarming and has further highlighted the fragility of the situation in the province. Whoever was responsible for the crime, it is a clear reflection of the catastrophically low level of security and law and order in Kosovo, the particular vulnerability of the Serb community and the lack of effective mechanisms for responding to such challenges. Only the courageous decision by Serbia's President Vučić to take the risk of visiting Kosovo, with the aim of giving support to his compatriots, has brought some calm to the situation.

However, it would be premature to suggest that this crisis has been completely dealt with. In particular, we want to emphasize that it is unacceptable to use the current situation as an excuse for enforcing Kosovo Albanian control of the province's Serbian-majority areas. We support Belgrade's calls for a full-fledged investigation into the murder of Ivanović by the international entities in Kosovo and for giving the competent Serbian authorities the opportunity to participate as well, especially given that the possibility of a Serbian police presence in the province is explicitly provided for in resolution 1244 (1999). In our view, special responsibility lies with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), which has claimed a key role in recent years in the maintenance of law and order but is now passing the baton to the Kosovo police, within whose purview it says the issue falls.

One wonders who, if not EULEX, is deciding to transfer such functions to the Kosovo police? On what grounds and according to what law has it been done, considering that at issue are powers delegated to EULEX by UNMIK, pursuant to a resolution of the Security Council? Who verified the ability of Kosovo Albanian security forces to objectively investigate crimes against Serbs? Is Pristina actually interested in doing that in any way? Its refusal to provide any of the evidence requested by Belgrade suggests the opposite, including the possibility of an attempt to conceal something. Immediate efforts must be undertaken to rectify these mistakes so as to ensure the most effective, comprehensive and impartial investigation possible and to identify those who planned and carried out the murder.

The passivity of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) is startling, constituting as it does the international security presence in the country, in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). Frankly, the meagre reports submitted to the Secretariat do not give us a clear picture of KFOR activities.

We cannot ignore the issue of the investigation into the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army. It remains unclear when the work of the Specialist Chambers established under the leadership of the European Union in The Hague will begin or if any specific indictments will be made. The fact that the Court's activities depend on the whims of the members of the Assembly of Kosovo, among whom are a number of former fighters, does not inspire great optimism. There is considerable additional evidence of the lamentable state of affairs in the province, some of which is described in the Secretary-General's report (S/2018/76). It includes a drop in refugee returns, persistent attacks on the homes and property of Kosovo Serbs, arson, acts of material damage and vandalism and attacks on Serbian Orthodox church property. These are the sad legacies of 10 years of Kosovo's independence.

Under the leadership of the United Nations as represented by the Security Council and UNMIK, the international community should continue to closely follow the situation and actively fostering the maintenance of stability and security in the province. In view of all of this, and given the current situation, we believe it would be absolutely inappropriate to raise the question of changing the format and periodicity of the Secretariat's briefings to the Council on Kosovo.

Mr. Orrenius Skau (Sweden): I too would like to begin by thanking Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing today. I would also like to thank Foreign Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku for their statements.

As Ambassador Çitaku pointed out, this month marks 10 years since Kosovo's declaration of independence. Over that decade significant progress has been made in the consolidation of peace and democracy in Kosovo. However, further efforts on the path of progress are needed. We are concerned about recent attempts to undermine the Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. It will be crucial to ensure that Kosovo's political leadership respects its previous commitments in that regard.

Like others, we strongly condemn the murder of Oliver Ivanović. It is vital that the investigation under way be able to run its course. But while Kosovo is

addressing its recent challenges, its European Union (EU) perspective is clear. Irreversible steps are needed, and the Government must resume the dedicated reform agenda that the people of Kosovo so desire. To that end, the Government needs partners across the political spectrum, and we encourage all political actors to engage in a constructive dialogue that will enable the necessary reforms to be speedily implemented.

The future of Kosovo will be saved by courage and committed leadership from Pristina and Belgrade. We welcome the steps being taken to breathe new life into the European Union-facilitated Belgrade-Pristina dialogue, and we encourage both sides to fully engage and deliver on their respective parts of all agreements reached. Good-neighbourly relations are vital for a stable and prosperous Western Balkans, and the success of the dialogue will also have positive effects on the wider region. In the meantime, it is essential to ensure that the status issue does not hamper Kosovo's European perspective or its membership in international organizations.

As the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and my European Union colleagues highlighted earlier today, yesterday the European Commission adopted its strategy for a credible enlargement perspective for an enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans. The strategy reaffirms Kosovo's place in Europe and its European Union perspective. It recognizes that the challenges Kosovo faces with regard to the rule of law, relations with its neighbours, and the reform agenda can and must be addressed within the framework of the European Union integration process.

Lastly, almost two decades after its establishment, it is clear that UNMIK has made an invaluable contribution in Kosovo but, looking forward, we hope that the Council will be able to consider the possible prospect of further downsizing the Mission's structure, size and tasks, as well as of adjusting the reporting and briefing period from three to six months.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing and for the report of the Secretary-General (S/2018/76).

As Ambassador Çitaku recalled, this month marks 10 years since Kosovo became a sovereign State. Let us reflect on the progress that has been achieved in this time. The people of Kosovo have participated in three parliamentary elections since declaring independence in 2008, as well as two countrywide mayoral and municipal elections. Kosovo has also shown solid economic growth and is now among the top 10 countries for starting a business, according to the World Bank's *Doing Business 2018* report, jumping from sixtieth to fortieth place in the report's ranking for ease of doing business. Recent action towards the full integration of Kosovo's judiciary within the European Union-facilitated dialogue underscores a real commitment to progress and stability.

This is not the same country it was 10 years ago when the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) was first established. That is not to say that Kosovo is without its challenges. Building a democracy takes time. The genuinely competitive local elections in the majority of municipalities in Kosovo were a welcome sign of healthy democratic competition, although we continue to be concerned about allegations of intimidation in Kosovo Serb municipalities. We also welcome President Hashim Thaçi's public statement on 1 February that Kosovo's Specialist Chambers cannot and will not be abrogated. We hope to see the initiative in the Assembly of Kosovo formally removed in the coming days, ensuring that the important work of the Chambers to maintain justice and the rule of law will continue. We continue to urge the Kosovo authorities to take all possible steps to swiftly resolve the murder of Oliver Ivanović, which has increased local tensions in northern Mitrovica. However, those concerns should not diminish the progress that Kosovo has made.

Kosovo can continue to build on its progress by transitioning UNMIK institutions to Kosovo institutions or other international organizations. While we appreciate UNMIK's years of work in Kosovo, it is time for a leaner, more efficient mission to focus on more tightly defined priorities that take into account all of the progress Kosovo has made in the past 10 years. Kosovo's challenges are far less severe than those that the fledgling nation was facing when UNMIK first arrived, and it therefore does not require a United Nations mission of this size. Moreover, Mr. President, in the Council's open debate yesterday (see S/PV.8175), that you presided over, the United Kingdom called for a Security Council that focuses on present and future challenges. With all of the world's pressing challenges, checking in on Kosovo's good progress in these meetings every three months is simply not a good use of the Council's time.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the long-standing position of the United Kingdom that it is past time for the Council to meet less frequently on this issue.

Mrs. Haley (United States of America): Let me first thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. I also thank the representatives from Serbia and Kosovo.

There is always more progress to make, but the conditions in Kosovo have changed markedly since the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo was established, in 1999. And it has changed for the better. That is work which we should be proud of, and it is work that the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia must now seek to build upon. As my colleagues know, peacekeeping reform has been a focus of my work on the Security Council. Central to that reform agenda is the support for political solutions on the ground, which include the parties themselves. Without the political buy-in of the various parties, no real progress can be achieved. What we end up with is an artificial, subsidized peace that is imposed from the outside. But what we want is real peace, which is created by the people who must nurture and sustain it. As Kosovo approaches the tenth anniversary of its independence, we believe that the opportunity is at hand for such a genuine peace. The people of Kosovo are establishing the institutions of self-government.

Last year, a new Administration was formed following free, fair and peaceful democratic elections. A functioning multi-ethnic democracy continues to be strengthened in Kosovo — one that respects the rule of law and the human rights of all. The United Nations Mission in Kosovo has been an important part of that achievement, but now it is time for leaders in Kosovo and Serbia to take their future into their own hands. Both nations' leaders must come together to reach an agreement on the normalization of Kosovo-Serbia relations as soon as possible. Much work has been done, but more progress is needed on crucial issues, such as ending corruption, strengthening the rule of law and laying the foundation for economic growth. For Kosovo and Serbia, normalization is a win-win proposition. Both nations will benefit from expanded ties with one another and with the wider European community.

To facilitate that, the United States reiterates its support for the Brussels dialogue. We appreciate and thank the European Union for its leadership in that effort. Its support and guidance has helped create the opportunity for both sides to make progress towards normalization and lasting peace. In the strongest terms, we urge the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia to take this opportunity. The coming months will be crucial. The stage is set. The benefits are clear. All that is needed is the political will to come together to create a just and lasting peace between Kosovo and Serbia.

A good indication of whether or not Kosovo and Serbia can come together to normalize relations will be how both nations respond to last month's murder of Kosovo-Serb politician Oliver Ivanović. The United States has condemned that killing in the strongest terms. We have offered our support for a full and impartial investigation by Kosovo's police and judicial institutions. The world will be watching to see if that investigation results in accountability for those responsible. We trust that Kosovo's institutions are capable of handling that professionally and impartially to hold those responsible to account without external interference. We call on all parties to avoid dangerous rhetoric at this sensitive time.

Another pillar of our peacekeeping reform agenda is to know what success looks like and, once it is achieved, to set the countries on a path to operate independently of the peacekeeping mission. We believe that we have achieved that measure of success with the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. It is long past time to wind down the Mission to preserve scarce United Nations resources. Significant changes are needed in the role of the United Nations in Kosovo. I urge the Council to waste no time in making those changes.

Lastly, we continue to strongly support Kosovo's membership in all relevant international organizations, including the United Nations and INTERPOL. Much has changed during the 19 years since the Council authorized the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo. The time has come for the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia to do what the Mission cannot and what it was never intended to do: to independently and cooperatively build a future of mutual security, prosperity and peace for all the peoples in the region.

Mr. Van Oosterom (Netherlands): First, let me thank Ambassador Tanin, as well as his staff, for their work, the detailed report (S/2018/76) and the briefing. I should like to add that it is also a great personal pleasure to see Ambassador Tanin in person today.

We welcome the close cooperation of Ambassador Tanin with High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Mogherini,

given the important role of the European Union in Kosovo. I will focus on three points today: first, Kosovo in the Security Council; secondly, the rule of law; and, thirdly, accountability.

With regard to my first point, concerning Kosovo in the Security Council, in our view, the situation in Kosovo today allows for a reduction of the frequency of our discussions in the Council from every three to six months. We also favour changing the format of our discussion to consultations. Furthermore, we call on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to focus on its core tasks, and we look forward to future options concerning its downsizing.

That brings me to my second point, namely, the rule of law. We condemn in the strongest terms, as others have done today, the recent murder of Mr. Ivanović. It is crucial that the perpetrators of that crime be found and justice be done. The rule of law is important for individuals to achieve a sense of closure, but it also has a broader importance for society as a whole.

That brings me to my third point, on accountability. Accountability is an important step on the road to reconciliation in Kosovo's society. For Kosovo's progress to be maintained, its judicial capacities must be accompanied by sincere political will to protect and promote the rule of law. In that light, recent steps undertaken to undermine the authority and legal basis of the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Special Prosecution Office are reason for concern. We encourage Kosovo's political leaders to fully act in line with the obligations to which they have committed themselves.

In conclusion, Kosovo is on a positive path, but much remains to be done to ensure accountability for past crimes. In that regard, let me also refer to my European colleagues' statements concerning the statement made on behalf of the European Union yesterday. The Kingdom of the Netherlands has confidence in Kosovo's future, and we call on all the relevant parties to build trust, continue peaceful dialogue and fully implement reached agreements.

Mr. Tanoh-Boutchoue (Côte d'Ivoire) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his excellent briefing on the situation in Kosovo, and convey to him my country's support for the work that he is doing to reconcile the various Kosovo Serb communities.

As the tenth anniversary of Kosovo's independence nears, we are pleased to note that much progress has been made in various areas in the country. Côte d'Ivoire, which has recognized Kosovo as an independent and sovereign State since 21 September 2011, enthusiastically welcomes the significant progress made in the country. Since 1999, thanks to the support of the international community, in particular by UNMIK, Kosovo has made enormous strides in security, economic and political areas. I would like to take this opportunity to commend the work carried out by the staff of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and by NATO troops in Kosovo. My country also welcomes the unremitting commitment of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo to the maintenance of multi-ethnic, transparent and democratic institutions in that country — an effort that dates back to 2008.

I would now like to focus on progress on the political front and to highlight the successful holding of municipal elections of October and November 2017, which demonstrated the country's democratic backbone and the maturity of its institutions. What is more, the broad participation of Kosovo Serb communities in the elections is cause for great optimism. Besides that, the comprehensive implementation of the agreement on the courts for northern Kosovo, concluded by the parties on 10 February 2015, is proof of the Kosovo authorities' recognition of their country's multi-ethnic nature and their desire to consolidate the rule of law. On the institutional front, Côte d'Ivoire welcomes the implementation of the agreements on freedom of movement. My country earnestly hopes that the Assembly of Kosovo will definitively enact its draft law on freedom of religion, with a view to guaranteeing that freedom for the Kosovo Serbian community.

Despite my delegation's optimism on the political situation in Kosovo, we continue to be alarmed by the murder on 16 January of Mr. Oliver Ivanović, leader of the civic initiative Serbia, Democracy, Justice. It goes without saying that if such political crimes continue, they will seriously threaten the country's stability and intercommunal unity. The Council must take every appropriate measure to ensure that the perpetrators of the crime are apprehended, tried and, if found guilty, convicted.

We also call for the rapid operationalization of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which will undoubtedly contribute significantly to

calming the sociopolitical atmosphere and easing tensions. We urge the Government and the Assembly of Kosovo to honour their commitments with regard to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and the Specialist Prosecutor's Office. We call on both to respect the agreement signed in 2015 with Montenegro on the demarcation of the two countries' shared border. My delegation is of the view that these commitments are inseparable from those undertaken by the Kosovo Government on 10 November 2017 with regard to the implementation of its European reform agenda.

In conclusion, we hope that the high-level meetings held last year between Pristina and Belgrade political authorities, under the auspices of the European Union High Representative, Ms. Federica Mogherini, will continue this year once again in the interests of reconciliation and a final settlement of the Kosovo question. These meetings, along with the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, have contributed to the significant progress made in the areas of human rights and national reconciliation between Kosovo's communities.

Finally, as I should have said at the outset, my delegation also wishes to thank Mr. Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia and Ms. Çitaku, Ambassador of Kosovo to the United States, for their briefings, which have enabled us to understand the reality of the situation in Kosovo.

Mr. Inchauste Jordán (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his informative briefing. We also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

The latest report (S/2018/76) on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) reveals problems that arise from the historical baggage of a still-latent conflict. Resolution 1244 (1999) therefore continues to be fully applicable and the supervision of the international community to be necessary. In that understanding, Bolivia once again calls for compliance with the resolution, including full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of the Republic of Serbia. Any attempt to turn the Kosovo security forces into an armed force would therefore run counter to resolution 1244 (1999), which provides for the establishment of a force based on a Council mandate. Bolivia is also concerned about the attempt to pass a law revoking the Kosovo Specialist Chambers. We believe that the rule of law and its impartial application is vital to combating impunity. Those responsible for the commission of war crimes must answer for their actions, regardless of who they are or where they come from. We stress that the victims deserve justice.

We also condemn the assassination of the political leader Oliver Ivanović. We want to highlight the words of Mr. Tanin when he said that this act raises concerns about the possibility of a new wave of political instability. We trust that the authorities and international agencies on the ground will work quickly to apprehend those responsible. We call on political leaders to cooperate and avoid escalating tensions.

Bolivia believes it important to ensure that the parties honour the commitments made in the negotiations sponsored by the European Union. In that connection, we urge them to work for a peaceful solution through dialogue and in line with the obligation to negotiate in accordance with international law. In that regard, Bolivia has called on the parties on several occasions to comply with the provisions of the Brussels Agreement, reached more than four years ago. Unfortunately, the establishment of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities has yet to take place. Its implementation is key to ensuring the security and human rights of Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija and essential to achieving a peaceful long-term settlement. We hope that the next report will note progress in this area.

We appreciate the efforts of the European Union and the mediation of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy with a view to advancing the implementation of the existing agreements. In that regard, we call on the parties to set start dates for a round of technical dialogue. We believe that these rounds of negotiations are ideal for building mutual trust between the parties. We also note the efforts of the parties to finalize the implementation of the agreement on the judiciary in northern Kosovo.

Bolivia appreciates the work that UNMIK has done in accordance with its mandate. We encourage it to continue working to build trust between the parties, use its good offices to mitigate tensions, employ peaceful means to seek consensus solutions and promote political dialogue and respect for human rights, with a view

to safeguarding peace as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. We commend its continuing work through its joint efforts with the municipal authorities and representatives of the province of Kosovo to protect the rights of communities, promote intercommunal reconciliation and inter-ethnic cooperation, facilitate the return of internally displaced persons, highlight the importance of gender equality and provide certification services.

We echo the concerns expressed by the international community about the mandate of the truth and reconciliation commission to be established by the Kosovo authorities. We believe that it should be inclusive and meet the minimum standards that it needs to function.

Finally, we call on the international community to contribute to the trust fund created by the Secretary-General to carry out community assistance projects to benefit the communities of the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali minorities.

Mr. Meza-Cuadra (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the convening of this informative quarterly briefing and are grateful for the comprehensive presentation provided by Mr. Zahir Tanin on the situation in Kosovo and the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We took note of the statements made and information provided by the Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

Peru acknowledges the progress made in building stability and economic development in Kosovo, which reflects the commitment of the parties to a process that is supported by the international community, particularly by the Security Council. In this vein, we support the renewed dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, facilitated by the European Union, as well as the implementation of the Brussels agreements. We believe that the parties should continue making progress in this respect in the interests of the peoples concerned and the Balkans region.

We also encourage greater participation of women and young people in political life, especially given the final results of the recent municipal elections. Like others, we deplore and condemn the recent assassination of Serbian leader Oliver Ivanović. We deem it urgent to identify those responsible and bring them to justice, and to ensure the security of vulnerable groups in the northern part of the Kosovo territory.

We are concerned at reports of abuse and arbitrary detentions by Kosovo police. Measures to safeguard the rights of minorities and internally displaced persons must continue to be implemented, and we hope that the community/association of Serb-majority municipalities will soon be established, in accordance with what was agreed in 2013. We deem it vital that there be full cooperation between the Kosovo authorities and the Specialist Chambers in The Hague responsible for atrocities committed by former members of the Kosovo Liberation Army. Impurity for these crimes cannot be tolerated.

We believe it is important to establish a truth and reconciliation commission. Intercommunal reconciliation that is based on full respect for different identities and customs is a key element for internal cohesion, diversity and cultural wealth. We also commend the initiatives that are being developed with the support of UN-Women to incorporate a gender perspective into various aspects of the Kosovo process.

My delegation wishes to highlight the role being played by UNMIK in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999). We believe that efforts to respond to the persistent challenges to the implementation of key aspects of the Brussels agreement must continue to be supported. Nonetheless, so long as the situation remains stable and progress continues to be made in terms of sustainable peacebuilding in Kosovo, the Council must ensure that at the right time, when conditions so allow, an orderly transition takes place from UNMIK to other United Nations entities present in the country.

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Kuwait.

I would like to begin by thanking the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his comprehensive briefing to the Security Council on the report (S/2018/76) pertaining to the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). The State of Kuwait reiterates its full support for the Special Representative in the discharge of his duties, and appreciates the vital role of the United Nations during the past period in assisting Kosovo in building its institutions, in accordance with security Council resolutions, especially resolution 1244 (1999). I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia,

as well as Ambassador Vlora Çitaku, and thank both of them for their statements.

The security and political developments in Kosovo without a doubt directly affect regional security and stability. The State of Kuwait applauds the measures taken by Kosovo to achieve more coherent and faster progress in implementing the European reform agenda and its full commitment to the implementation of all the consequent obligations within the framework of the agreed agenda. Kuwait welcomes the free and fair municipal elections held on 22 October 2017, which were the second local elections to be held in Kosovo since the signing of the First Agreement of Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations between Belgrade and Pristina, on 19 April 2013.

We appreciate the role played by political leaders and their self-restraint in the aftermath of the assassination of Mr. Oliver Ivanović, as well as the commitment of both Pristina and Belgrade to cooperation in order to prevent political tensions from escalating.

On the other hand, we express our concern at the continued challenges facing the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade, as indicated in the report of the Secretary-General before us. Kuwait stresses that the high-level dialogue between the two sides, which is being facilitated by the European Union, remains the most appropriate framework to resolve all pending issues in order to achieve consensual, equitable and sustainable solutions. We also express concern regarding attempts by members of Parliament in Kosovo to repeal the law on supporting the work of the Specialist Chambers and the Prosecutor's Office, which would undermine the credibility of the Parliament. We also call upon all parties in Kosovo to remain fully committed to justice and the rule of law.

In conclusion, we stress the importance of the continued efforts of the international community to urge Pristina and Belgrade to overcome their differences and to achieve consensual, equitable and sustainable solutions that are acceptable to both parties and lay the foundation for peace and stability in the region. UNMIK should continue to cooperate constructively with Pristina and Belgrade and all communities in Kosovo in order to enhance security, stability and respect for human rights.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.